

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 DHA-02 /061 W
-----061430Z 083295 /53

O R 061300Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8265
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MOSCOW 7931

E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, ECON, UR
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV'S SPEECH ON THE CONSTITUTION: COMMENT

REF: MOSCOW 7916

BEGIN SUMMARY
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1. WE FIND BREZHNEV'S SPEECH ON THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION REMARKABLE
FOR THE WAY HE LIMITS THE HUMAN RIGHTS GRANTED UNDER THE
CONSTITUTION AND HIS REFERENCE TO THE STALIN PURGES. WE
NOTE THE WAY IN WHICH HE IS PUTTING HIS OWN NAME ON THE NEW
CONSTITUTION AND ENHANCE HIS IMAGE BY THE MANNER THE
CONSTITUTION IS PRESENTED BREZHNEV ATTEMPTS TO UNDERSCORE
IMPROVED AND MORE EFFICIENT ADMINISTRATION OF THE STATE AND THE

ECONOMY. ALSO NOTEWORTHY ARE HIS MENTIONS OF THE DEFENSE COUNCIL AND SOVIET OBLIGATIONS AS A MEMBER OF THE "SOCIALIST COMMON-WEALTH". HE APPEARS SENSITIVE TO WESTERN AND EUROCOMMUNIST CRITICISM ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE USSR. END SUMMARY.

2. BREZHNEV'S MAY 24 SPEECH TO CC PLENUM ON THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION (CARRIED IN JUNE 5 CENTRAL PRESS--ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS TEXT) IS AN AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENT OF THE NEW DOCUMENT'S MEANING. IT ALSO PROVIDES THE BASIS FOR THE NATION-WIDE DISCUSSION ON IT WHICH IS TO ENSUE. WHILE WE LEARN VERY LITTLE OF WHAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION MEANS, BEYOND WHAT THE TEXT OF THE CONSTITUTION ITSELF OFFERS, WE ARE STRUCK BY SEVERAL ASPECTS OF BREZHNEV'S EXPOSITION.

3. BREZHNEV'S TWO PARAGRAPH ELABORATION OF THE LAST SENTENCE OF THE ARTICLE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IS REMARKABLE, IF ONLY BECAUSE IT IS SO MUCH LONGER THAN THE TEXT ITSELF. BREZHNEV CLEARLY IS UNDERSCORING THE EXTENT TO WHICH CIVIL RIGHTS ARE SUBORDINATE TO THE INTERESTS OF SOCIETY AND THE STATE. WE NOTE ESPECIALLY THAT "POLITICAL FREEDOMS ARE GRANTED" IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INTEREST OF THE WORKERS AND FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF SOCIALISM. BREZHNEV SEEMS TO BE EXTENDING THE ALREADY BROAD CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS. IN THAT CONNECTION, ONE LIKELY POSSIBILITY FOR BREZHNEV'S CONDEMNATION OF THE POST-1936 REPRESSION WAS TO EASE THE STING OF THE QUALIFICATIONS BY SUGGESTING THAT ALTHOUGH RIGHTS ARE CIRCUMSCRIBED, THE STATE WILL NOT ENCROACH ARBITRARILY ON THEM.

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4. BREZHNEV'S CLEAR REFERENCE TO THE STALIN ERA (ALTHOUGH IT IS UNSPECIFIED AS SUCH) MAY ALSO BE DESIGNED AS A PLEDGE THAT HE WILL NOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO BECOME THE OBJECT OF A PERSONALITY CULT (WITH ALL THAT FOLLOWED THEREFROM UNDER STALIN). THIS MAY BE OF SOME CONCERN TO SOVIET CITIZENS, GIVEN THAT BREZHNEV IS CLEARLY TRYING TO PLACE HIS NAME ON THE NEW CONSTITUTION, AND ENHANCE HIS IMAGE BY THE MANNER OF PRESENTING IT FOR DISCUSSION. THUS, WE NOTE THAT ITS FIRST PRESENTATION WAS MADE BY BREZHNEV SPEAKING AS GENERAL SECRETARY TO A PARTY PLENUM. WHILE IT IS A NORMAL METHOD FOR EVENTS TO BE ANNOUNCED, THE CONSTITUTION IS AFTER ALL A STATE, NOT A PARTY DOCUMENT, AND COULD HAVE BEEN PRESENTED (BY BREZHNEV) IN THE CONTEXT OF A CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION REPORT TO THE SUPREME SOVIET. IN ANY CASE, THE METHOD OF PRESENTATION MERELY UNDERSCORES (IN THE SAME WAYS AS DO SOME PROVISIONS OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION) THE OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED DOMINANCE OF PARTY OVER STATE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 MOSCOW 7931

5. WE NOTE THAT WHILE BREZHNEV DID MENTION A GOOD MANY SPECIFICALLY NEW CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS, HE DID NOT INCLUDE THE CREATION OF A FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDUM OF THE SUPREME SOVIET. WHILE THE TIMING OF THE MOVE IS NOT CLEAR, WE ASSUME THAT BREZHNEV INTENDS TO BECOME THE CHAIRMAN WHILE LEAVING MOST OF THE CHORES TO THE FIRST DEPUTY, AND ARE INTRIGUED THAT HE CHOSE TO
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IGNORE THIS, PROBABLY IN ORDER TO AVOID APPEARING TO BE OVERLY AMBITIOUS.

6. BREZHNEV APPEARS TO BE TELLING THE SOVIET CITIZENS THAT THE STATE APPARATUS WILL BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO LOCAL INITIATIVE, AND THAT THE CITIZEN'S ROLE IN HIS GOVERNANCE WILL BE INCREASED. HIS MESSAGE IS THAT STATE AND ECONOMIC ADMINISTRATION WILL BE LESS REMOTE, MORE ACCOUNTABLE UNDER LAW, AND PRESUMABLY MORE EFFICIENT, AT THE SAME TIME THAT IT BECOMES MORE STREAMLINED. HE SEEMS TO BE REASSURING THE CITIZENS THAT THE NEW, MORE EFFICIENT DIRECTION WILL NOT BE MORE INTRUSIVE THAN IS THE CASE NOW. WE ARE INTRIGUED BY REPEATED MENTIONS OF IMPROVED EFFICIENCY IN THE ECONOMY AND GOVERNMENT ADMINISTRATION BY OPENING THIS TO LOCAL INITIATIVE. HOWEVER, AT THE SAME TIME THE RINGINGLY ENDORSES THE CENTRALIZED NATURE OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL DIRECTION. WE DOUBT THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION WILL IN FACT RESULT IN A MORE RESPONSIVE AND SENSITIVE STATE ADMINISTRATION AND ASSUME THAT WHEN LOCAL INITIATIVE MEETS THE DEMANDS OF THE CENTER THE LATTER WILL PREVAIL.

7. IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT BREZHNEV SHOULD HAVE MENTIONED THE NEW SECTIONS ON FOREIGN POLICY AND DEFENSE, BUT IT MAY BE SIGNIFICANT THAT HE CHOSE TO HIGHLIGHT THE ROLE OF THE SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDUM IN THE WORKINGS OF THE DEFENSE COUNCIL. THIS WAS THE ONLY MENTION OF NATIONAL DEFENSE IN THE WHOLE SPEECH. ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, WE NOTE THAT HE MENTIONED THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE USSR AS A MEMBER OF THE SOCIALIST COMMONWEALTH AND ITS OBLIGATIONS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH SOCIALIST INTERNATIONALISM WITH RESPECT TO FRIENDSHIP, COOPERATION AND COMRADELY, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL ACTIONS, AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO THE SOVIET AUTHORITY OVER EASTERN EUROPE.

8. FINALLY, SOVIET SENSITIVITIES TO WESTERN (AND APPAR-
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ENTLY EUROCOMMUNIST) CRITICISM ARE UNDERScoreD BY BREZHNEV'S COMMENT ON HOW BOURGEOIS AND REVISIONIST PROPAGANDA IS FALSELY ATTACKING THE USSR ON HUMAN RIGHTS, AND HIS OBSERVATION ON THE "FULL" AND "REAL" RIGHTS THAT THE NEW CONSTITUTION OFFERS.
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Message Attributes

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